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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 6136
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3825
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3684
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4378
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 4309
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1420
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000072

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, EEB, ANKARA FOR AGRICULTURAL COUNSELOR,
COMMERCE FOR EHOUSE/DSTARKS

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TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ETRD](#) [EINV](#) [PGOV](#) [BTIO](#) [SENV](#) [TSPL](#) [TX](#)
SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: INNOVATION IN IRRIGATION NEEDS A
U.S. PARTNER

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Sylvia Reed Curran. Reasons 1.4 (B) a
nd (D).

1. (SBU) Irrigation for farmland and limited water resources are perpetual problems in Turkmenistan. One small business organization has an idea for how to irrigate crops more efficiently, but is having trouble promoting and gaining acceptance for its idea. "Dayhan Rowachlygy" was founded by a family of Turkmen agricultural and water management researchers. The father, Ovez Ovezov, received his Ph.D. from the All-Soviet Machine Institute, and has worked with irrigation machinery on large farms since 1964. The mother earned a Ph.D. in water management in Tashkent, and the daughter, a former Cochran Fellowship Program participant, is currently working towards her Ph.D. at the Institute of Water Management in Ashgabat. Ovezov's idea for irrigation is to use center pivot sprinkler irrigation machinery, which hangs above the ground and sprays water. He has used such machinery since the early 1990s. He says this system is better suited to Turkmenistan than a drip irrigation system.

2. (C) Ovezov explained that he works as a senior researcher on a government farm in the Ahal province that produces feed for cattle. In 1992 his farm entered into an agreement with Israeli company Merhav, and Merhav brought American irrigation equipment to the farm. (COMMENT: Merhav officials told us that they were able to work in Turkmenistan because a relationship they had with the wife of the late President Niyazov. Mrs. Niyazov, who is Jewish, has a home in Isreal. According to the Israeli ambassador, Merhav closed its office in Ashgabat in 2009, because business had dried up. END COMMENT.) When the agreement ended in 1994, the farm director wanted to get rid of the American irrigation equipment, but Ovezov managed to convince him to keep it. The 350 hectare farm still uses the American equipment, which is center pivot system equipment made by the Lindsay Corporation. Ovezov said that the farm has seven of these machines.

13. (SBU) Ovezov's idea for improving irrigation in Turkmenistan involves the government buying center pivot irrigation equipment, instead of using the drip system. He said that to irrigate farmland for the whole country, the government would need to buy 1,500-2,000 center pivot irrigation machines. However, he believes that, if properly maintained, the machines would last 50-60 years. Drip systems are more expensive, he claims, because the hoses need to be replaced every three to four years, and they have to be buried deep in the ground. He added that irrigating from underground causes the salt in the soil to rise to the surface, further increasing the salinity of Turkmen water sources.

14. (SBU) However, Ovezov admitted that ideas about which type of irrigation system works best are often a sensitive subject. He would like to conduct research over a two to three year period to prove that the center pivot irrigation system is well-suited to Turkmenistan. To do that, he said, he needs permission from the Turkmen Government, and he needs a U.S. partner. The U.S. partner would provide the equipment and conclude the agreement for the study with the Turkmen Government. When asked why he could not just use the data he had collected over the last 17 years of using the center pivot machinery, he said that he was not officially authorized to use the equipment then, so he needed to start fresh in order to be able to openly share all of the data with the government.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: This situation, where an entrepreneur has a

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potentially good idea but faces difficulty in implementation, is common in Turkmenistan. Although Ovezov's "Dayhan Rowachlygy" organization is registered with the Ministry of Justice, he still wants a U.S. partner before approaching the Ministry of Water Management about conducting a feasibility study. This seems to partly be a financial issue, because the Ministry is unlikely to pay for the equipment needed to do the study. However, Ovezov is likely also concerned about getting in trouble for using the irrigation equipment that Merhav brought in, instead of returning to the more common drip irrigation system. Until the Turkmen Government begins supporting innovators, there is little chance that it can develop a modern and efficient agricultural or water management system. END COMMENT.
CURRAN